Disease Cluster Risk Communication

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What We'll Discuss

- What is Risk Communication?
- Why is it difficult?
- Strategies and Tips necessary for effective cluster communication
- Risk Communication Resources

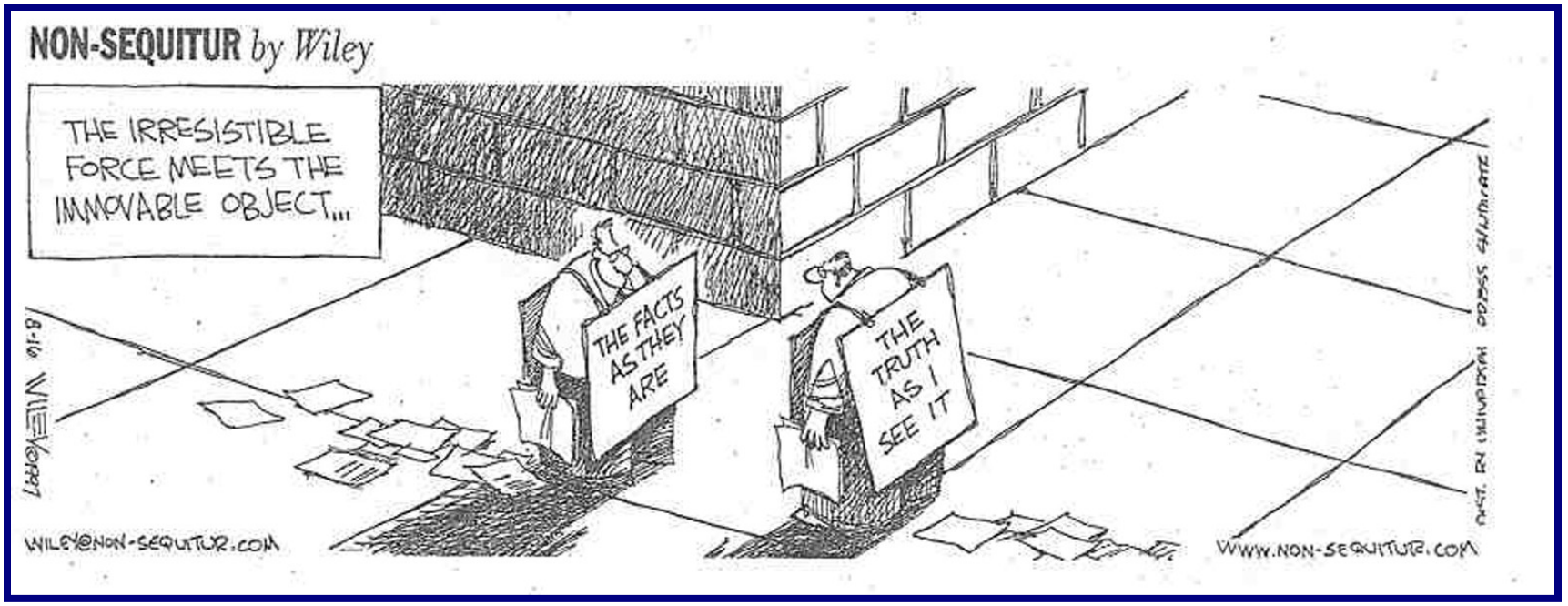
Risk Communication Definition

“A technique for communicating in high concern, low trust, sensitive, highly emotional, and/or controversial situations.”

Barriers to Effective Risk Communication

- Lack of understanding
- Lack of trust and credibility
- Mental Noise

Lack of Understanding



Perception = Reality ????

Common Cancer Cluster Misperceptions

- Any and all types of cancer should be included in the cluster
- No one should be getting cancer - cancer rates and statistics
- Risks from environmental exposures

Key Messages

The most important information that you want people to:

- **Hear**
- **Understand**
- **Remember**

Key Message Content

DO:

Make them short, simple, and

DO NOT:

focus on technical facts and figures

Message Traps to Avoid

- Humor
- Negative terms
- Guarantees or absolute phrases
- Complex language and jargon
- Personal beliefs
- Attack
- Risk comparisons
- Worst case speculation
- Risk numbers or concentration values

Keep it Positive

Focus on what you can do to help, not what you can't!

Cut the Jargon

- **Does your audience really need to learn the word?**
- **Can you replace it with a simple definition?**
- **Ask yourself if you're using it to make the communication process easier for you?**

Risk Comparisons

Use them at your own risk!...

THE ROANOKE TIMES
Monday, September 20, 2004

STEPHANIE KLEIN-DAVIS | The Roanoke Times

Mellisa Williamson, 35, a Bullitt Avenue resident, worries about the effect on her unborn child from the sound of jackhammers.

Risk Comparisons

- Like dynamite
- Cast light or alienate
- Apples to Apples
- Credible 3rd party sta
- Never use to argue fo “Acceptability”
- For Perspective Only

Avoid Numbers

- **Concentrations – Confusion over units and relative size of the number**
- **Money – Double Edged Sword**
  - *You spent that much on this junk?* or –
  - *Is that all that we are worth?*
- **Numerator effect with risk values**

Barriers to Effective Risk Communication

- Lack of understanding
- **Lack of trust and credibility of the information sources**
- Mental noise

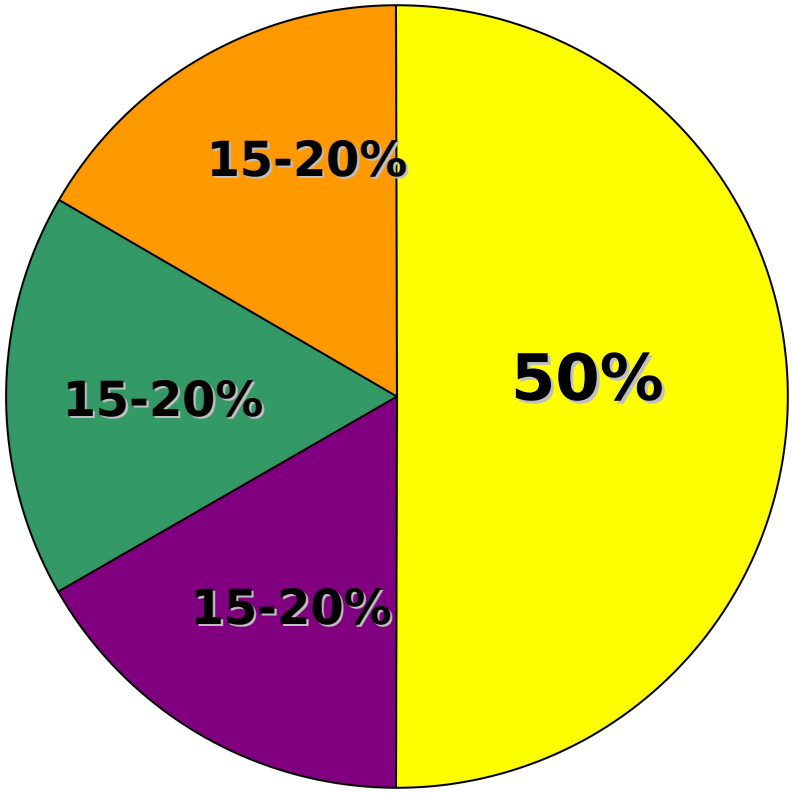
TRUST AND CREDIBILITY RANKING
1998 Survey Results

Most

Least

- Local citizens and/or citizen advisory panels who are perceived to be neutral, respected and well-informed about the issue
- Non-management employees
- **Nurses, physicians and other health professionals**
- Safety/emergency response professionals (fire chief)
- Professors / Educators (from respected local institutions)
- Non-profit voluntary health organizations
- Professional societies
- Media
- Environmental Groups
- Industry Officials
- **Federal Government Officials**
- Environmental Consultants from “for-profit” Firms

Trust and Credibility Factors



Building Trust

“People want to know that you care before they care what you know…”

Empathy not Sympathy

- **Empathy** – "**Understanding**, being **aware of**, being **sensitive to**, and **vicariously experiencing** the feeling, thoughts, and experience of another"

- **Sympathy** – "Having **common feelings**"

Displaying Empathy

- Know the audience
- Address their key concerns
- Communicate early and often
- **Listen**

Communicate Early and Often

Miner in critical condition; families anguished after early report 12 survived

MSN website January 4, 2006

The news spread after people overheard cell phone calls, he said. In reality, rescuers had only confirmed finding 12 miners and were checking their vital signs.

Officials knew of the miscommunication **after about 20 minutes**, Hatfield added, but **didn't talk to the families for nearly three hours** because they wanted to confirm the status of the victims and prevent another round of confusion.

"There was **no apology**. There was no nothing. It was **immediately out the door**," said Nick Helms, son of another victim, Terry Helms.

Credibility Transference

“A lower credibility source takes on the credibility of the highest credible source that agrees with its position on an issue.”

Barriers to Effective Risk Communication

- Lack of understanding
- Lack of trust and credibility of the information sources
- **Mental noise**

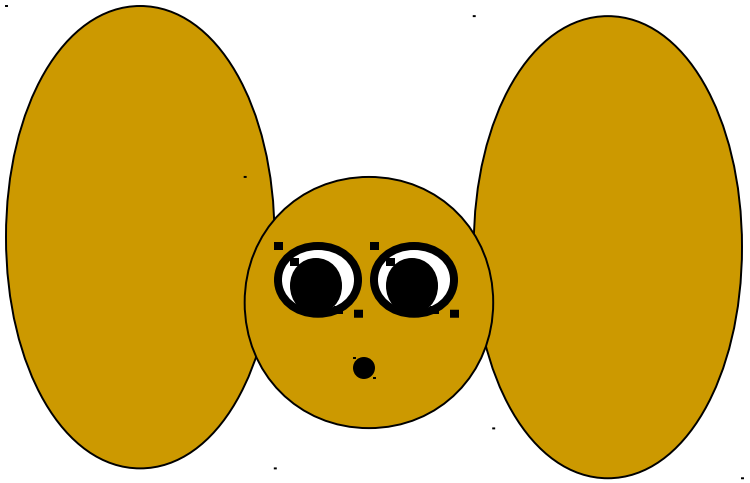
Mental Noise

Angry or Upset People:

- Typically focus on **negatives**
- Can miss up to **80%** of what you say

OVERCOME and AVOID MENTAL NOISE

- Active listening
- Clarity
- Conciseness



Successful Risk Communicat

Clarity and Conciseness

- **Limit** the number of messages
- Keep your messages **short**
- Use **easy to understand** language
- **Layer** your information

Visuals

- Can be extremely effective
- Increase understanding
- Clarify abstract concepts
- Help put information (especially numbers) in context

Ways to Share Your Messages

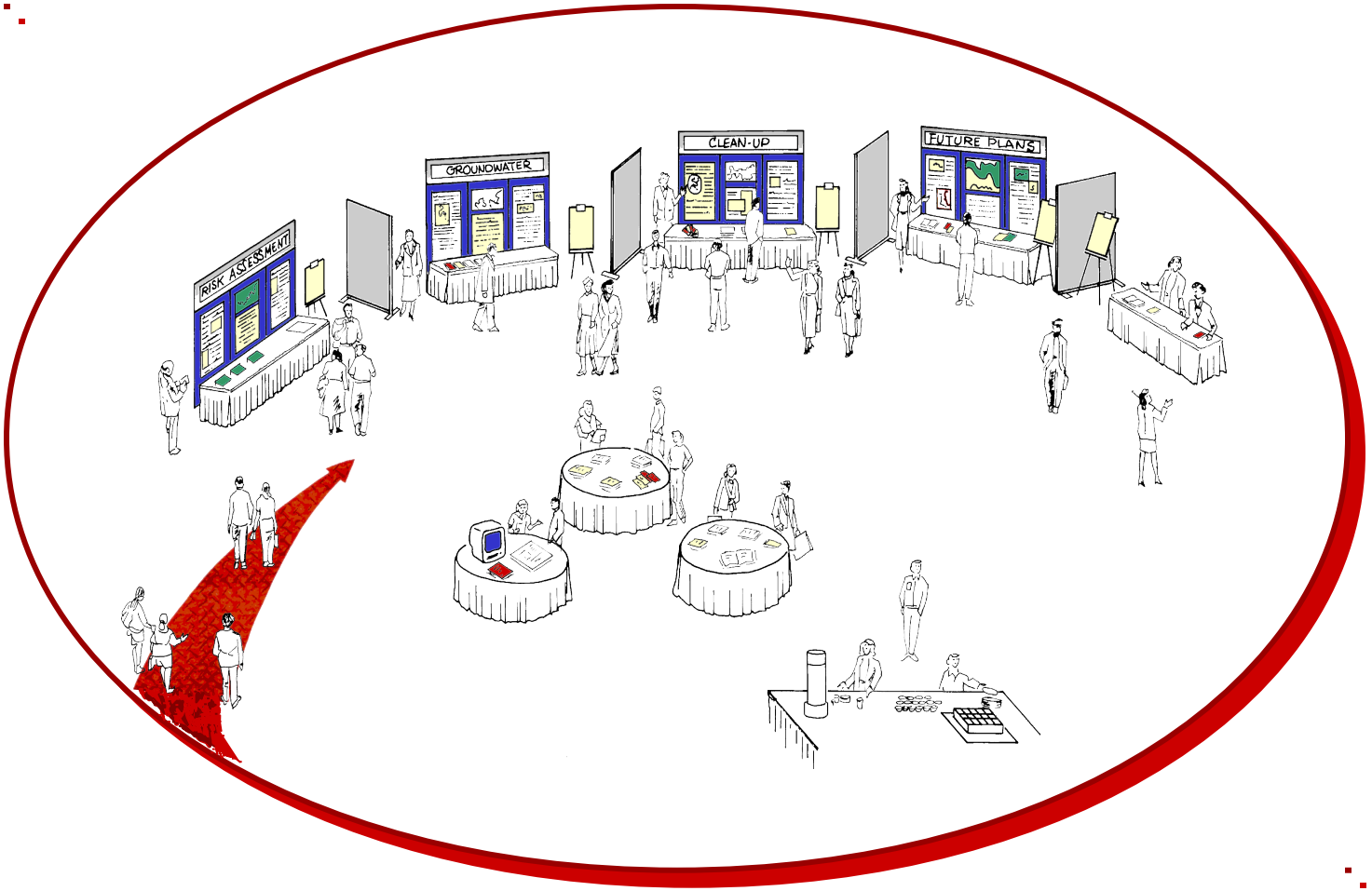
- Fact sheets
- Web sites
- Videos
- Press releases/Interviews
- Site tours
- Small group meetings
- Public meetings

****Public Affairs involvement ****

Public Meetings

- **Avoid Town Hall Style Meetings**
  - Encourages “Us versus Them”
  - Limits Information
  - Fear of Public Speaking

Open House Public Meetings



For More Information

- **Visit the NEHC website**
- **www-nehc.med.navy.mil/HERC/index.htm**
  - Risk Communication Reference Materials
    - Primers (Risk Communication and Risk Assessment)
    - Writing Executive Summaries
    - Hosting an Open House Meeting
  - Training Opportunities

CECOS Risk Communication Workshop

- **ISEERB Course**
- **Visit website at** www.cecos.navy.mil

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